



NEWS RELEASE

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DOC to Close McNeil Island Corrections Center Due to Budget Cuts

OLYMPIA – The Department of Corrections will close [McNeil Island Corrections Center](#) by April 1 as a result of budget cuts. The agency had originally planned to close Larch Corrections Center near Vancouver but determined that closing Larch would not save enough money.

DOC will save \$6.3 million each year by closing the prison located on an island in south Puget Sound. It would have saved \$2 million by closing Larch. The agency must reduce spending by nearly \$53 million as a result of across-the-board cuts due to declining tax revenue.

“This will save the most money without compromising the safety of our staff, the offenders and the public,” Secretary Eldon Vail said. “The budget crisis is causing us to make some of the most painful decisions in our agency’s history.”

DOC will have enough beds in its remaining 12 prisons to house the more than 16,000 offenders who are currently incarcerated.

The costs to operate the ferries, barges and fire boats to McNeil Island will shift to the Department of Social and Human Services which operates the Special Commitment Center the island. The island will not need as many ferry and barge runs once the prison is shut down.

Over the past year DOC has downsized McNeil Island from a medium-security prison that houses 1,200 offenders to minimum-security prison that currently houses about 515 offenders. There are about 245 staff members who work at the prison.

“The impact this will have on the staff and their families is enormous,” Vail said. “We will do all we possibly can to find them positions elsewhere in the agency. It’s a talented group of people so we want to retain as many as we can.”

This will be the third prison the agency has closed within a year. DOC closed two minimum-security prisons earlier this year, Ahtanum View Corrections Center in Yakima and Pine Lodge Corrections Center for Women near Spokane.

DOC has operated [the prison since 1981](#) when the state signed a lease with the federal government to take over the federal penitentiary which had been closed since 1976.

“The staff members there have heard for years that it was too expensive to operate on an island, yet they continued to do outstanding work,” Vail said. “It’s simply the victim of a historic budget crisis.”

[Larch Corrections Center](#), a minimum-security prison located on Larch Mountain in Clark County, will go back to full capacity and house 480 offenders. It currently houses about 240 offenders.